

Distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Irene Skrybailo, I live in New Milford and I am testifying in support of the \$3.6 million included in the Governor's budget adjustment bill for the Department of Public Health to fund gun violence prevention programs included in Governor's Bill 5037.

The State needs to invest more in preventing community gun violence that has disproportionately impacted Black and brown communities. Gun violence is an urgent public health crisis that demands the state invest more to save lives. On average, someone in CT is murdered with a gun once every three days.

If the state can afford more than \$300 million in tax cuts, as [proposed](#) by the Governor, it can afford to invest more than \$3.6 million spread over two years from federal pandemic relief.

Beyond the loss of life and profound impact on communities that experience high levels of gun violence, it has a tremendous economic cost. According to [Everytown](#) and [Giffords Law Center](#), it's estimated that gun violence (of all kinds) costs Connecticut taxpayers between \$60 and \$90 million annually, and carries a yearly societal cost of up to \$1.2 billion. It makes FISCAL and MORAL sense to invest in gun violence prevention.

“Despite the majority of the gun owners saying they support many gun violence prevention policies, 59 percent said they think that gun control advocates want to take their guns away. Among gun owners who said they supported universal background checks, 62 percent said that they nonetheless feel alienated from taking part in gun violence prevention because they perceive that gun control advocates are trying to eliminate aspects of gun culture. This is a win for them... this department will not focus on taking guns away from law abiding citizens, but stopping the violence by focusing on rooting out the problems.” (Boston University School of Public Health)

While I commend the Governor for proposing \$3.6 million to fund community gun violence prevention programs, I urge the legislature to do more. It should create an Office of Gun Violence Prevention in the Department of Public Health, and commit to more substantial levels of funding.

Sincerely,

Irene Skrybailo , New Milford, CT